

THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE TEACHINGS AND METHODS OF THE PRESENT TRAINING-SCHOOLS FOR NURSES FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE GRADUATE NURSE ENGAGED IN PRIVATE WORK *

BY BETTY EICKE

Graduate Salem Hospital, Mass.

IN summarizing the points that call for reform in our training-schools for nurses we would mention first the long hours of work, the restricted opportunities for study, and the few chances for recreation.

It is a psychological fact that when the body is taxed to the utmost the mind cannot do its best work, and the mind of a nurse is no exception to the general rule. The inauguration in many of our large hospitals of a three-years' course was certainly a step forward, but it fails of its highest good if it only mean another year in the hospital and not shorter hours of work in the wards and more time for study.

Usually the years spent in the hospital, although so rich in experience, are yet lost years as far as general knowledge of the world is concerned: newspapers can only be read by a great effort, reading for pleasure merely is almost out of the question, and though time may be given to attend church, it is of little use, for nature asserts her rights and tired eyelids droop and the weary brain refuses to receive impressions. Now, this is not as it should be; it makes a nurse narrow and one-sided, and also encourages her to gossip, for if she lose interest in the outside world, what has she to talk about but hospital affairs?

It is hard to lay down rules, as circumstances vary so in different hospitals, yet it seems as though, if the working hours are from seven A.M. to seven P.M. each day, the nurse should be off duty three hours of that time, and a whole day free from duty once every month would certainly show good effects in the renewed energy with which the nurse would return to her tasks.

If the preliminary training which has been brought to our notice within the past year should become an established fact, it would do away with the difficulty of getting all the studies and all the practical work into the hospital course. It would certainly be a great advantage to a nurse to go through a thorough course in anatomy, physiology, bacteriology, and other necessary branches of study before entering the hospital. Still, such an arrangement would have its disadvantages, for it is just

* Prize essay.

this combination of theoretical and practical work which makes the hospital course so interesting and valuable. Book-learning by itself is easily forgotten unless constantly reviewed, and hospital work without study is apt to become mere drudgery. Besides, it seems as if a three-years' course properly arranged ought to give a nurse a very good education, providing she has commonsense and a fair general education as a foundation. No young woman lacking these essentials should be admitted.

Another custom to be criticised, fortunately not a very common one, is the sending out of nurses on long cases while in training. This is done to make a little extra money for the hospital, but it is detrimental to the nurse thus sent, for she loses her lessons and lectures and hospital experiences during that time, and gains little or nothing, since she will get enough experience in private nursing after she leaves the hospital. It is also unjust to the graduate nurse, as it takes away the work which belongs to her.

The question of paying nurses while in training has often been argued and much might be said on either side, but it certainly would tend to elevate the training-schools if no money were paid to the nurse, at least for the first year. She should be provided with uniforms and the necessary books at the expense of the hospital, but not with money. Under such arrangements the hospital would feel more duty-bound to regard the interests of the pupil nurses, and might be more willing to give shorter hours of work and more time for study and recreation.

The question of capable teachers in our training-schools has been a vital one for some time, and one of the results has been the establishment of the course in hospital economics at Columbia University. No doubt the future will show the advantage of this onward step. There can be no successful training-school without the right kind of a woman at its head. For as a mother's influence is felt in the home and the teacher's in the school-room, so is felt the influence of the superintendent of nurses in the hospital. Her character will be reflected in the conduct of her nurses and her ideals will become their guide. In all their professional life their standard of right and wrong will be governed by the teachings of their leader, she who revealed to them little by little the mysteries of this most needed art, who led them step by step with daily watchfulness, "whose guiding gave the knowledge to their brains, the cunning to their fingers, which they hold a sure and precious talisman to gain this sad world's comfort, which is more than gold."

Therefore it is not enough for a superintendent of nurses to be able to teach her pupils the practical part of nursing; that, of course, is essential, but more is needed. She must be a woman of culture and refinement, one who will be able to inspire the young women under her

charge with a high regard for their work. Aside from the regular class-work and the very necessary talks on hospital etiquette, a superintendent should never lose an opportunity to impress upon her nurses the peculiar sacredness of their calling. In no other work is it so necessary that all womanly qualities should be developed to the highest degree as in private nursing, and unless this is impressed upon the nurse while in the hospital so forcibly that she shall never forget it, there is danger of her becoming lax and indifferent when the exilement of hospital days is over, thus bringing discredit upon her profession. Thus a superintendent must not only have the present in her mind and see that the machinery of the hospital runs smoothly, but she must ever look into the future and remember what she is fitting her nurses for.

Truly great is her responsibility and great are her opportunities, for it lies with her to educate that ever-increasing host of young women who should be, and usually are, the great comforters of the world. They enter alike the houses of the rich or poor, relieving suffering, sharing burdens, bringing hope and cheer to the disturbed household. No other work calls for higher qualifications or offers richer reward. Let us make it what it should be, let us bring enthusiasm to our work, demand the highest and best in ourselves and others, and never rest content, for stagnation means death; only growth is life.

HYGIENE OF THE HOUSEHOLD

By EVELYN HARRISON

Graduate Post-Graduate Hospital, New York

(Continued from page 199)

I READ lately the statement that a hot bath followed by a quiet sleep would lift years off the shoulders of any woman and make her far more attractive.

This is not, perhaps, the highest basis on which to lay a plea for the daily rest, but it is a very important thought to all women, as the question of appearance has and will always have a large influence in their lives.

Mabel A. Dean in a physical culture magazine says: "Whenever a woman seeks success, it is destined that her personal appearance shall help or hinder. . . . It is more than skin deep; it is soul deep in its far-reaching effects, which shall be felt through future generations."

If we consider a moment we will surely acknowledge that the per-